

Message Text

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TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: SOWETO COMMUNITY COUNCIL CHOSEN IN POOR TURN-OUT

REF: JOHANNESBURG 0818

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE MINISTER OF PLURAL AFFAIRS MULDER'S ALL-OUT EFFORT TO ENTICE SOWETO VOTERS TO SUPPORT THE NEW COMMUNITY COUNCIL, A MEAGER SIX PERCENT TURN-OUT FOR THE BY-ELECTIONS REPRESENTED ONLY MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT. NONETHELESS, MULDER DECLARED HIMSELF SATISFIED WITH THE "SOLID LEADERSHIP WE" ELECTED. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS A CONTINUING "MISTRUST OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL" AND PLEDGED TO WORK FOR ITS ACCEPTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN SPITE OF CONNIE MULDER'S BEST EFFORTS (REFTEL), SOWETOENS TRICKLED TO THE POLLS SATURDAY IN A SIX PERCENT TURN-OUT TO FILL VACANCIES IN SOWETO'S COMMUNITY COUNCIL. THE BY-ELECTION CALLED
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BY MULDER AFTER THE INITIAL ELECTION FAILED TO FILL THIRTY OF THE FIFTY WARDS POSITIONS, REPRESENTED ONLY A MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT OVER THE FIVE PERCENT VOTER RESPONSE IN THE FIRST ROUND ELECTION. FORMER URBAN BANTU COUNCIL (FORE-RUNNER TO COMMUNITY COUNCIL) CHAIRMAN DAVID THEBAHALI, REPRESENTING THE SOFASONKE PARTY, WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN.

3. MULDER REPLIED TO THE POOR TURN-OUT BY STATING IT WAS HIS BELIEF THE COMMUNITY COUNCILS WOULD GAIN ACCEPTANCE OVER TIME AND THAT THE LOW LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION WAS, IN PART, DUE TO (BLACK) UNFAMILIARITY WITH THE CONCEPT OF VOTING AND THE DEARTH OF ORGANIZED POLITICAL MOVEMENTS TO ORGANIZE VOTERS. HE SUBSEQUENTLY ADDED THAT THE LEGISLATION ENACTING THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL WAS NOT SET IN CONCRETE AND THAT AMENDMENTS, PRESUMABLY EXPANDING THE POWERS OF THE COUNCIL, COULD BE CONSIDERED OVER TIME.

4. COMMENT: WHILE IN ALL FAIRNESS, THERE PROBABLY IS SOME MERIT TO MULDER'S ASSERTION THAT LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH VOTING PROCEDURES AND LACK OF ORGANIZED POLITICAL MOVEMENTS CONTRIBUTED TO THE POOR TURN-OUT, THE OBVIOUS REASON WAS THE REFUSAL OF ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE COMMITTEE OF TEN OR, SPECIFICALLY, INDIVIDUALS LIKE DR. NTHATO MOTLANA OR PERCY QOBOZA TO ENDORSE THE SCHEME. IN FACT, IT WAS WIDELY KNOWN THROUGHOUT SOWETO THAT THESE TWO INFLUENTIAL PERSONS WERE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO THE COUNCILS IN ANY SHAPE OR FORM, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE SOMEWHAT CIRCUMSCRIBED FROM SAYING SO.

5. THE FINAL MAKE-UP OF THE COUNCIL, INCLUDING ITS CHOICE OF CHAIRMAN, LOOKS EMBARRASSINGLY SIMILAR TO THE DEFUNCT UBC, RIDDEN OUT OF EXISTENCE BY THE SOWETO STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL FOR BEING "PUPPETS" OF THE SYSTEM.

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6. DR. NTHATO MOTLANA, CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE OF TEN WHICH HAS CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED COMMUNITY COUNCILS AS PRESENTLY ESTABLISHED, COMMENT TO CONGEN APRIL 18 THAT THEBEHALI WAS "DISASTER" AS CHOICE FOR NEW "MAYOR". HE WAS KNOWN AS "CROOK" TO WHOLE COMMUNITY AND HAD GONE FROM JOB TO JOB AS EACH SUCCESSIVE EMPLOYER HAD FIRED HIM FOR OUTRIGHT THEFT OF COMPANY FUNDS. MAKHAYA AS "DEPUTY MAYOR" WAS PERHAPS HONEST, BUT NOT RESPECTED. SOWETO'S WEALTHIEST BUSINESSMAN, EPHRAIM TSHABALALA, WHO WAS CANDIDATE FOR "MAYOR", WAS NOT REALLY IN RUNNING BECAUSE HE WAS "ALMOST ILLITERATE". ONLY GOOD THING MOTLANA COULD SAY FOR THESE NEW COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEMBERS WAS THAT THEY HAD "PHYSICAL COURAGE" TO STAND FOR ELECTION AT ALL AND EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO VIOLENT RETRIBUTION BY POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. JOHNSON

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